

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 63
OPPOSING THE PRESIDENT'S ESCALATION IN IRAQ

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OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Mr. KANJORSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join the overwhelming majority of the American people, the Congress, and many top U.S. military commanders to voice my opposition to President Bush's ill-conceived plan to send more American troops into the middle of an ongoing civil war in Iraq. The President's plan, which has been attempted before on four separate occasions and failed, is simultaneously too little and too much. 21,500 troops is too little to make a difference in a city of 6 million who are unwilling to see beyond their sectarian differences, and too much burden to place on an American military already stretched to the breaking point.

Madam Speaker, in October 2002, I voted in favor of the legislation to allow President Bush to defend the national security of our country against the stated threats posed by Saddam Hussein. In large part, I based my decision on the information I learned in several classified briefings with high-level administration officials about the capabilities of the Iraqis to deliver weapons of mass destruction to the United States.

These officials pointed to an imminent threat posed by Saddam Hussein and his potential use of unmanned aerial vehicles to deliver weapons of mass destruction to our shores. Of course, we now know that these weapons, as well as the Bush Administration's claims regarding Saddam's ties to al-Qaeda, were fictional. The consequences of our actions, however, are quite real.

To date, the Iraq war has come at a terrible cost to the United States. More than 3,100 service-members have been killed and greater than 23,400 have been wounded. My home state of Pennsylvania has lost 149 soldiers and over 1,000 have been wounded. Moreover, the United States has spent almost \$380 billion dollars to date, with hundreds of billions more requested by the Bush Administration.

The war in Iraq has also diverted much-needed resources away from fighting the war on terrorism and eradicating al-Qaeda. The focus on Iraq and away from the real threat of al-Qaeda has resulted in an increasing number of deadly attacks launched by Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in and around Afghanistan. On Tuesday, the Washington Post reported that NATO's top commander, General John Craddock, does not have enough forces for the anticipated spring offensive by the Taliban. General Craddock warned that "failure to send reinforcements was weakening the mission and jeopardizing the lives of soldiers fighting" in Afghanistan.

More than 135,000 troops are currently serving in Iraq. Many have completed their second or even third tour of duty. Multiple tours of duty for National Guard and Reserve members have created hardships for many families in my district and throughout the United States. Currently, these brave American forces are caught in the middle of a religious dispute that began in the 7th century between rival Muslim factions. These underlying sectarian hostilities have come to the fore in Iraq and have grown into a full-blown civil war.

Bringing stability to Iraq cannot be achieved through an escalation of our military involvement in that country. Rather, Shiites and Sunnis must decide for themselves to forge a political solution to this crisis in which the interests of all Iraqis are represented. Nevertheless, President Bush is ignoring the advice of his top generals, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, the majority of Congress, and the American people by announcing his intention to send an additional 21,500 American troops into harms way to continue pursuing a flawed policy.

Madam Speaker, I oppose the escalation of our troop presence in Iraq. The time for more troops was 4 years ago, when General Shinseki presciently warned of the need for hundreds of thousands of military personnel to stabilize post-war Iraq. But the President, the Vice President, and the former Secretary of Defense believed they could fight this war on the cheap, with too few troops, too little armor, and too little help. They were wrong, and now it is too late.

Madam Speaker, from my perspective, the resolution before us this week has been long overdue. The American people have called on this Congress to express their disapproval of this war of choice in Iraq and this President's prosecution of it. To that end, I will support this resolution and urge my colleagues to do the same.
